

**Third Year Masters in integrative Child and Adolescence Counselling and Psychotherapy.
January - December 2021**

Thank you to the generous grant awarded by the FPSA, having received partial funding for my third year of training, which has enabled me to continue my learning journey on the Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy training at Terapia.

Summary of and reflections on training:

Within my third year of training, I have been introduced to a range of different modalities which has included Person and Child centred Therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Drama and Movement, Sand Tray, Use of Puppets, Art and Music therapy. The training was facilitated by the course tutors and co-facilitated by visiting lecturers on specialist topics around self-harm, sexual abuse, sexuality, bullying and cyber-bullying and working with teenagers.

Due to the restrictions put in place during COVID, a proportion of the learning was delivered online. My learning process was not impacted as the tutors were able to continue with the information exchange and skills work within those sessions remotely. The standard of teaching was not compromised despite the challenges that arose due to COVID. It was a relief when the restrictions were lifted in the spring term, to be able to return back to being with my peer group and immerse myself in the experiential experience of the therapeutic learning process.

Alongside my attendance on the teaching evenings and weekends, I was required to complete 50 hours of supervised practice with young people. I also had to submit two written essays, a reflective journal at the end of each term and submit a portfolio upon completion of the academic written work and clinical hours.

Use of training at work since:

Being an experienced social worker within a specialist assessment and therapeutic multi-disciplinary team, I have been able to transfer my learning of the key counselling principles into my practice and uphold an empathic and compassionate approach of work with young people and their families, which is integral to the therapeutic framework we work within.

Since attending the training, I have been putting the skills and techniques into practice with several of the young people I have been working with, with good effect. It has increased my confidence in working in a less structured, more relational way, and I have seen the benefit to the young people of using creative based approaches which matches their communication style.

In my direct work, I often encounter young people who struggle to communicate their narrative to a professional as they are holding strong feelings which include fear, shame, sadness and anger. Through establishing safety within the therapeutic relationship, I have introduced therapeutic approaches of using story, art and music to support the young person in the therapeutic process. I have witnessed the transformative effect of using the creative arts with young people.

I have introduced the use of therapeutic stories with young people who have been able to find comfort in being able to make sense of their experience through a story. I have supported young people to develop their own stories which has revealed to me a sense of their own inner world.

Therapeutic stories “can empower the client to move from victim to creator”. I have witnessed to the healing power of stories, as the young person uses images and metaphors to express his/her thoughts and feelings which have previously been unnamed and yet craved understanding. Other young people have used music as a form of communication and creating their own song lyrics as part of their therapeutic process.

My learning has increased by self-confidence in developing new skills and approaches which I can integrate into my practice. It allows me to recognise my prior learning as a social worker, and newly learnt therapeutic approaches enables me to integrate the ‘old and new’ as they co-exist in building on my experience, knowledge, and practice.

Whilst I still have two years remaining of the training to complete, I hope that I can continue my learning to improve my practice when working with young people and their respective families. I want to say thank you again to FPSA for helping me on this journey, which enables me to help the young people I work with more effectively, with the hope of creating lasting change. Without the FPSA funding my drive and ability to proceed with this learning would not have been possible. I am due to commence year 4 of my MA in January 2022.